

ISO 9001:2015 ENSURES CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

ABOUT THE RUBBER GROUP. The Rubber Group was founded in 1986 in Belleville, New Jersey, as a distributor of molded rubber products. In 1991, the owners decided to move the company and its five employees to Somersworth, New Hampshire, where they anticipated a better quality of life. Around this time, customers began requesting products The Rubber Group did not carry. To retain those customers, the company started manufacturing custom molded rubber products in 1994. Since then The Rubber Group has relocated to Rochester, New Hampshire, where it has around 65 employees serving customers in the industrial, oil and gas, transportation, aerospace, and medical industries.

THE CHALLENGE. The Rubber Group had been ISO 9001 certified since 1996. In 2015, the company lost its quality manager two weeks before an ISO audit. Management immediately promoted one of the techs, Mike Stuart, to the position of quality manager, even though he had a lot on his plate at the time. Fortunately, The Rubber Group had a mature ISO system in place and Stuart managed to get through the audit just fine. However, there was more work for him to do. The Rubber Group needed to upgrade its ISO certification from ISO 9001:2008 to ISO 9001:2015 and company leaders knew they couldn't handle the transition themselves.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. The Rubber Group decided to participate in the ISO 9001:2015 Upgrade Collaborative Program offered by the New Hampshire Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NH MEP), part of the MEP National Network. In the past, the company had taken advantage of NH MEP services for Lean training and plant layout assistance. With the support of its partner, Exolytics, NH MEP created a program designed to develop and train small-to-medium enterprises on the ISO 9001:2015 standard at an affordable cost. The Rubber Group sent two employees to the collaborative program. For Stuart, the ISO training was so effective was because it was held with a small group of companies. "We could bounce ideas off each other, discuss different strategies, and go over what we learned together in class and what we did on-site," he said.

The Rubber Group achieved the ISO 9001:2015 Upgrade Certification soon after completing the program. After investing in quality improvements and workforce training, the company is increasing sales, retaining existing business, and adding jobs. "ISO is a part of us," said Rob Pruyn, president and operation manager. "It's embedded in our organization and helps us focus on customer satisfaction."

"I would highly recommend using the team at NHMEP. They consistently deliver a wide range of important services at very reasonable costs. We've used them for Lean training, energy conservation consultancy, focused improvement activities, and of course the ISO 9001:2015 Upgrade Collaborative Program. The results are continued revenue and job growth coupled with improved financial performance."

-Rob Pruyn, President and Operations Manager

RESULTS



Increased sales by **\$600,000**



Retained sales of **\$6,000,000**



Added **5** full-time employees



Invested **\$380,000** in quality improvements



Invested **\$150,000** in workforce training

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